

# ***Key Ideas from the Keys to Quality Accreditation Project***



## **Completing the Program Description and Preparing for Validation**

*by Joyce Ruppell, Keys to Quality Staff*

The most crucial parts of the final task of the accreditation process are completing the Program Description, in the white book, and preparing for the validation visit and exit interview. The Program Description is a compilation of all the data and information that you have collected during the self study. The Description can be completed in several ways: self study participants can work on specific areas of the Description as a group or independently, it can be completed as you finish certain tasks, or it can be completed in sections or all at once when all the data has been gathered. Usually the program administrator or person in charge of information collection plays a major role in completing the Description. Administrators will spend approximately 2-3 hours completing the Program Description, provided all the data has been gathered.

Begin by completing Part One: Center Profile. This can be done six months before your validation visit but only if you do not anticipate any staff or student changes. We recommend completing only the first six pages with the exception of the staff pattern and schedule. It is rare that a program does not have any changes for six months. You want your Program Description to be as accurate and as up-to-date as possible and yet be able to accomplish all of the tasks in a timely manner in order to be ready for your validation visit.

To complete the Program Description, use the three summary sheets for the ECCO Form, the Staff, the and Family Surveys in order to complete Part Two: Results of Classroom Observations A-J. Do not fill in the ratings of center and validator under "Groups". The validator is responsible for that when she or he conducts the visit. You will need to write a comment for any item you have rated below a three. If there is anything unusual about your program, whether or not you have rated the criterion a three, you may want to provide an explanation. For example, if your playground does not have a fence, explain how you have made safety accommodations and enhanced the playground experience for children. You could write: "While our playground is not fenced at this time, we have provided each teacher with a "Playground in a Box". Each box has jump ropes, sidewalk chalk hoops, cones, bean bags, etc." Then you could explain that fencing is part of your strategic plan. It is very important to remember that the Program Description is the only "picture" that NAEYC has of your program. Be sure to do everything you can to present an accurate and positive view of your program. Stephanie Glowacki, NAEYC co-commissioner, advised Keys to Quality that administrator comments in the Program Description are rated just as high as validator comments on how criteria are, or are not, being met.

For more information please contact the Keys to Quality Project through the Rhode Island Department of Education, Preschool Grant Coordinator, (401) 222-4600 x 2408; e-mail: [abcohen@ride.ri.net](mailto:abcohen@ride.ri.net) or CHILDSPAN at (401) 729-0765, e-mail: [RICCTS@intap.net](mailto:RICCTS@intap.net).